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LETTER DATED 23 JULY 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The mass expulsions and killings of ethnic Croats in the region of central Bosnia deeply concerns the Government of the Republic of Croatia. In this respect, I wish to remind you of my letter of 9 June 1993 (S/25920), written on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, requesting an emergency meeting of the Security Council to address that very issue. The Security Council has not replied to my request, although the situation has dramatically worsened for the Croats in central Bosnia after the recent Muslim offensives.

Since the writing of that letter, the central Bosnian towns of Konjic, Jablanica, Travnik, Kakanj, Fojnica, Zenica, Bugojno, and the greater part of Gornji Vakuf and Novi Travnik, which forms 15 per cent of the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, have been ethnically cleansed of Croats by Muslim forces. Over 100,000 Croats have been driven out from these areas while some 200,000 Croats are surrounded by Muslim forces in the areas of Novi Travnik, Busovaca, Vitez, Zepce, Usora, Kiseljak, Kresevo and Vares. The endangered Croatian population in these enclaves is larger than the combined Muslim populations which are besieged by Serbs in Zepa, Srebrenica and Gorazde. Yet, the Security Council has never considered putting these areas under United Nations protection.

The international media and the diplomatic community have, however, focused on the "ethnic cleansing" of the Muslims by the Bosnian Croats in Mostar. While my Government has condemned extremism on all sides, I have to remind you that, due to the influx of Muslim refugees from eastern Bosnia, Muslims comprise 60 per cent of the population of Mostar as opposed to 42 per cent before the war and that Muslim forces control half of the city. In light of these facts, the complex situation in this city must be considered from a more comprehensive perspective than the oversimplified approach which depicts the situation as a case of one-sided "ethnic cleansing".

In this light, I wish to mention that the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who comprised 25 per cent of the population several decades ago and 18 per cent of the total population of the country before the present war, are the smallest ethnic community and have suffered great losses from the policy of ethnic cleansing. Over 200,000 Croats have been expelled or killed in Bosnia and Herzegovina while the towns of Banja Luka, Jajce, Kotor Varos, among others,

have been almost totally emptied of Croats. In addition to the 200,000 Croats who are besieged by Muslim forces in central Bosnia, approximately 80,000 Croats are encircled by Serb forces in the areas of Sarajevo, Tuzla and Bihac. For the Croat population, the situation in Bosnia is worse than what had occurred in the Republic of Croatia where Serbian forces expelled or killed almost 10 per cent of the Croatian population.

My Government wishes to express its deepest concerns with regards to the recent statement by the Co-chairmen of the Steering Committee of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, about "the importance of extending a republic with a predominantly Muslim population as far south as possible so as to make credible any guarantee of access to the Croatian port of Ploce" (S/26066, para. 16 (e)). It is our firm belief that such comments have only encouraged the Muslim forces to intensify their attacks in that direction against Croatian-inhabited areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

We strongly urge the Security Council to take measures to stop the Muslim attacks against Croatian-inhabited regions in Bosnia and to take note of the tremendous humanitarian catastrophe which has befallen the Croats of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who, on many occasions, have not received sufficient attention from the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Having said this, we wish to inform you of the recent request by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, Mate Granic, to the local Bosnian Croat leaders, to allow for the implementation of the agreement in Makarska, signed on 10 July 1993, whereby the delivery of humanitarian aid would be allowed to proceed. In this regard, we are very satisfied that UNPROFOR has stated that the Bosnian Croat forces have allowed the passage of emergency aid convoys to 1.1 million displaced persons in central Bosnia.

As long as the Bosnian Croats continue to find themselves in such severe conditions, especially in central Bosnia, and as long as the Security Council is unwilling to address their plight, my Government will have difficulty in successfully influencing events which may lead to a peaceful settlement for the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I wish to reiterate the position of the Government of the Republic of Croatia that the solution to the present crisis in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina lies in the cessation of hostilities by all warring sides, their implementation of agreements allowing for the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance and the reaching of an internal constitutional system for Bosnia-Herzegovina acceptable to all three constituent nations.

I would be grateful if you would provide for the distribution of this letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ambassador Mario NOBILO
Permanent Representative